

Drama of the Pruitts 1989

Characters

Dean: Pater Familias, President and Treasurer of IEA
France: Mater Familias, Chair of the Board of IEA and
President of ICA
Andre, Paul and Charles, their sons.
Kim, Andre's wife
Denise, Kim's live-in sister
Chairman Sakai, Founder and President of Yokohama Academy
Mr. Nakamura, Manager of the International Center,
Yokohama Academy
Gretchen and Eloise, Employees of IEA
Lynmar and Mary, Paul's employers
Three of Charles' employers
George, a man who needs no introduction

Act I. Charles Confronts his Employers

Scene 1. Charles enters his boss's office in New York City. It is furnished with a desk, two chairs and a large refrigerator. Charles' face shows extreme exhaustion; his clothes hang loosely about his emaciated frame.

Charles: Food, food! I've been trapped in this building for a week, finishing our latest project. You've got to let me out to get a bite to eat!

Boss: We've got to get the report done. I'm sure you can hold out for another two or three days. Here...take a mint. I always carry them in case of indigestion.

Charles: That does it! I've had enough of New York. The prices are too high, my life's too rushed, you work me too hard, and I miss my mother. Either you transfer me to Washington or I move there without you.

Scene 2. The boss talks with his colleagues around a restaurant table loaded with food.

Boss: Charles Pruitt is unhappy. I'm worried...he's our second most important employee after the computer.

Executive 1: Employees get unhappy all the time. Why worry? We can always replace him with another computer.

Executive 2: But this guy embodies the spirit of our company: service, conscientiousness, yuppiehood.

Executive 1: All right, all right. Give him what he wants. But make it appear that we're doing it grudgingly. We've got to keep an upper hand on these young hordes.

Scene 3. Charles, looking rested and well fed, drives onto the stage in a red Acura loaded with his possessions. The Washington Monument can be seen in the distance.

Charles: What a great city! The Lincoln Memorial, the Kennedy Center, mother's cooking. I think I'll drop in on George to tell him what a great job he's doing here.

Act II. Kim Continues to Finish Her Thesis.

Kim, Andre and Denise are sitting around the breakfast table in the house they've been remodeling in Cortland, New York. It is a Saturday morning in August.

Kim: I discovered last night that half of my experiments are wrong because somebody made a silly mistake last year.

Andre: Sounds familiar. The world is full of incompetent, lazy boobs. Don't worry. I know you'll be done some day. We're still going to Hawaii for Christmas aren't we?

Kim: Sure. The trip will inspire my work. I've heard they have the best petunia genes in the world out there.

Denise: Andre, George is on the phone.

Andre: Oh, hello Mr. Bush. Thanks for calling back. I'm worried that you're going to cut the nuclear submarine budget because Mr. Gorbachev is being so nice; and my team is doing such a good job redesigning the computers. Oh...that's great. The fleet is going to be re-assigned to saving the baby seals. I'm so relieved.

Denise: Andre, please get off the phone! I'm sure the college recruiters are trying to call me. Saturday's their busiest day.

Andre: Goodbye George, I have to go. Thanks for calling, and say hi to Barbara for me.

Act III. Mother Starts a College

Scene 1. France and Dean are sitting at an old wooden table in the offices of International Education Associates (IEA), which is located on the ground floor of the Pruitt house in Bethesda, Maryland. It is January.

Dean: You started a company half a year ago and you only have one contract. That's not enough to keep you busy. I was hoping you'd be out most of the time so I could use the computer to finish my book while I'm still on sabbatical.

France: Don't worry. Consulting firms always start small. I'll put stamps in approval books and go swimming regularly, so you can use the computer at least two hours a day.

Scene 2. Same offices in mid-July. Dean and France are sitting around a sleek new glass-topped coffee table. The phone is ringing. Gretchen and Eloise are pounding away at computers. The beep of a FAX machine is heard.

France: Our trip to Hawaii last month and Switzerland last week were fun, but I really got behind with our three contracts, even though I sent and received FAXes almost every day we were away.

Dean: The hotel in Vevey couldn't believe it when you got a 60-page FAX from Japan!

France: We've got to get organized for the next few days. I plan to visit our 30 Japanese students at Catholic University this morning and pick up a member of the Advisory Committee at the airport this afternoon. Chairman Sakai and Mr. Nakamura arrive from Japan tomorrow, and the video crew will be here the next day to film a promotional video on the Capitol steps. They'll be staying at our house for a few days. In other words, it's another normal week in the job of establishing International College of America (ICA). Can you stay home today? We're expecting delivery of another computer and vegetables for the dinner Chairman Sakai is going to cook for us?

Scene 3. December 27. Dean and France are sitting at a table at L'Auberge chez Francois.

France: Happy Anniversary. It's only been thirty years. Tell me, how does one live with a distinguished professor?

Dean: The same way one lives with a college president. Life will never be the same! It was a nice meal, but we'd better rush home to do the year-end books for IEA. And you have to study your Japanese and send your nightly FAX.

Act IV. Dad Helps Run IEA While Continuing to Commute to Buffalo Every Week.

Same office scene as in Act III, Scene 3. Gretchen is sitting at the conference table typing a FAX. Dean is talking on the phone. France has gone off to a meeting with the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

Dean: IEA, may I help you. No, I'm sorry, this is not ICI. We're not a chemical weapons contractor. No, mam. I don't know Mr. Cheney. No mam, I'm not trying to deny what we do. We're starting a Japanese college in Annapolis.

Gretchen: Another one of those political watchdog groups eh? What did she say?

Dean: She said that the Japanese college story was too far out to be true. Then she was silent for a minute and finally said she hoped we'd spray the students' throats with Listerine every night to avoid infectious disease. Boy, Washington is a crazy place!

Gretchen: This is certainly a comedown for you, to be a receptionist in your wife's business.

Dean: That's all right. I'll get my book done next year. And I've had fun during my sabbatical with lecture trips to Holland, Austria and Australia.

Act V. Paul Works for Brock and Company

Scene 1. Mary's office at the Brock Company in Malvern, Pennsylvania. Mary is behind her desk with a stern expression on her face. Lynmar enters from the left.

Mary: Paul, you're not completing your quota.

Lynmar: You're just shuffling papers. You're not doing the mail fast enough.

Paul: The dog ate my homework and my little brother played with my presentation before the glue had a chance to set.

Mary: Times have changed, Paul. You're no longer in school. Work harder.

Scene 2. Same location

Paul: Mary, you haven't yelled at me in four months.

Mary: You've really improved. As a matter of fact, I've just approved a 500%* raise. We only ask one thing...that you gargle with Listerine every night.

Exeunt. (Dad said he couldn't approve this play unless it ended with "exeunt.")

We'll leave it to you to discern fact from fiction in this future Broadway hit. Best wishes for the New Year. May it bring you happiness in a world of peace.

Dean, France, Andre, Kim, Paul and Charles Pruitt

*In reality, the raise was 5%, but the author is allowed some poetic license.